SPIRITUALIZED

Let It Come Down

(Arista)

Spiritualized to Play Carnegie Hall with Full, 13-Piece Orchestra October 25! US Fall Tour Dates to Come!

"Prepare to be blown away...Spiritualized: Their amazing return!"
— ***NME***

Spiritualized's much-anticipated new LP, titled ***LET IT COME DOWN***, is everything that one would hope for and expect from the successor to their last, highly lauded studio LP, *LADIES AND GENTLEMEN WE ARE FLOATING IN SPACE.* ***LET IT COME DOWN*** is the most song based LP yet from Spiritualized, representing a remarkable achievement by Jason Pierce in both writing and arranging an LP on such a vast scale. It represents more than a two-year undertaking, from writing the original songs and enduring the recording process to completing the mixes in May 2001.

The 11-song LP, entirely written and arranged by Jason Pierce, utilizes some 100 musicians, including gospel and choral singers. It was recorded initially at Air studios before moving to the renowned Abbey Road Studio Two, where all the orchestral and choral arrangements were recorded live and produced by J Spaceman and John Coxon.

Recordings began at the end of 1999 and were completed at Abbey Road by the end of summer 2000. Once recording commenced, the new conglomeration of musicians who were brought in stayed to comprise the present line-up of Spiritualized.

Alongside Jason are keyboardist Thighpaulsandra and sax player Ray Dickaty, who have been part of the group since the Royal Albert Hall show in October 1997. Sometime member and co-producer John Coxon also returns to the band playing guitar and keyboards. The group is also joined by Doggen (guitar), Martin Schellard (bass), Kevin Bales (drums) and Tom Edwards (percusssion). **Five brass players will complete a new 13-piece band that will be touring the US in October!**

270 Lafayette Street, Suite 1302 • NY, NY 10012 GIRLIE ACTION MEDIA, Inc. (PH) 212.334.3200 • (FX) 212.334.4413

LET IT COME DOWN is the fourth studio LP from Spiritualized, following *LAZER GUIDED MELODIES* (1992), *PURE PHASE* (1995) and *LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...*(1997). It was *LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...* that was the breakthrough LP, topping most writers and magazine end of year polls by the end of1997 and becoming Spiritualized's first UK Gold record. Following its release, Spiritualized toured extensively, playing memorable shows at the Royal Albert Hall (October 1997), the CN Tower in Toronto (the highest show on earth) and the World Trade Center in New York (both in 1998). The Royal Albert Hall show was released as a double live CD/record in October 1998.

The full track listing is as follows:

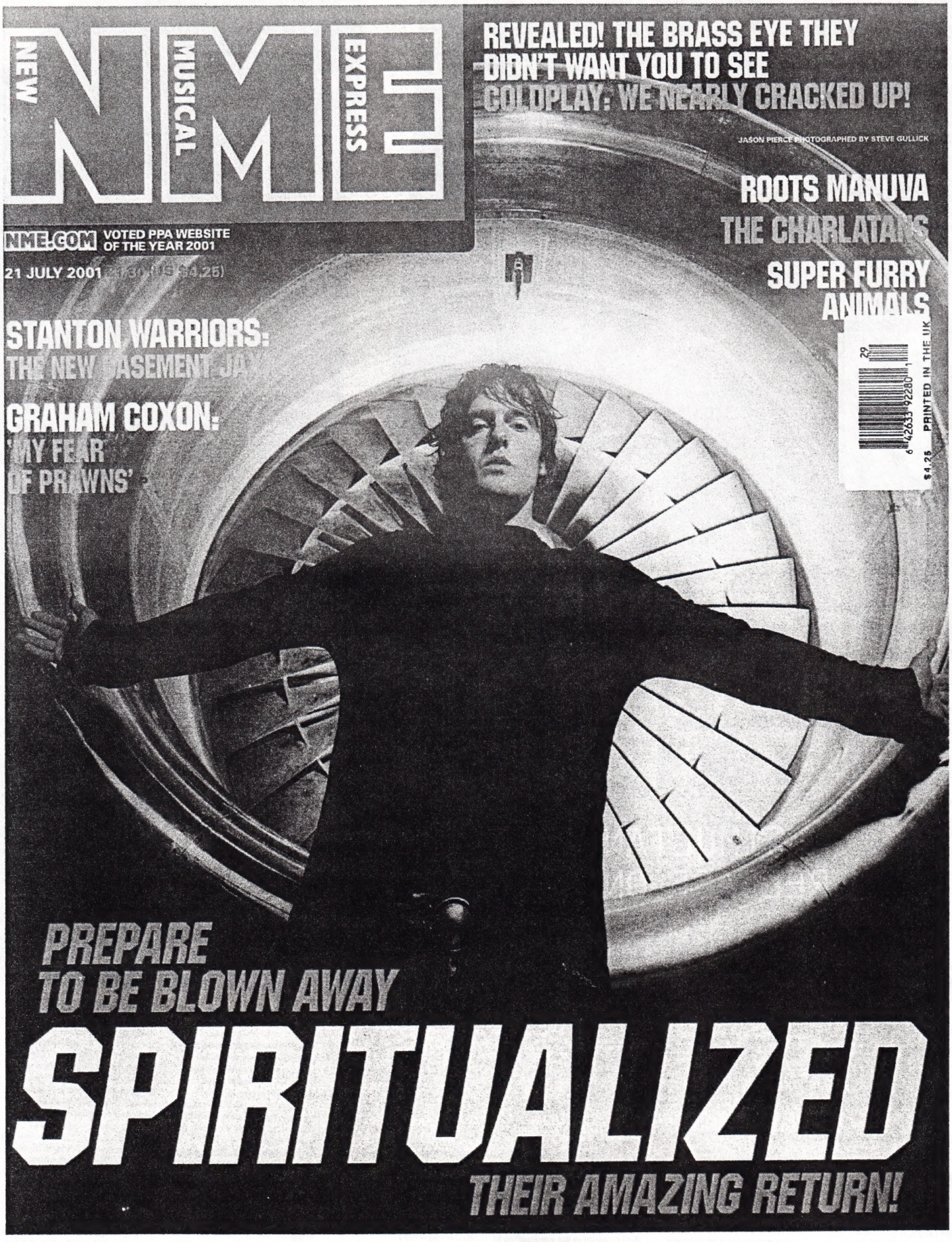
ON FIRE
OUT OF SIGHT
DON'T JUST DO SOMETHING
THE TWELVE STEPS
THE STRAIGHT AND THE NARROW
DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN
I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOU
STOP YOUR CRYIN'
ANYTHING MORE
WON'T GET TO HEAVEN (THE STATE I'M IN)
LORD CAN YOU HEAR ME

Let us know if you've got any questions.

Felice, x110
Felice@girlie.com

Chloe, x139
Chloe@girlie.com

Derek, x104
Derek@girlie.com


NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS
NME
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21 JULY 2001
REVEALED! THE BRASS EYE THEY DIDN'T WANT YOU TO SEE
COLDPLAY: WE NEARLY CRACKED UP!
JASON PIERCE PHOTOGRAPHED BY STEVE GULLICK
ROOTS MANUVA
THE CHARLATANS
SUPER FURRY ANIMALS
STANTON WARRIORS:
GRAHAM COXON:
'MY FEAR OF PRAWNS'
PRINTED IN THE UK
PREPARE TO BE BLOWN AWAY
SPIRITUALIZED
THEIR AMAZING RETURN!

IF I HAD BEEN IN REHAB, THE LAST THING I'D DO IS MAKE A RECORD ABOUT IT'

WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY NEW SPIRITUALIZED ALBUM COMPLETED, **JASON PIERCE** SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON CLEANING UP, SETTLING DOWN AND HIS REPUTATION AS A RUTHLESS TYRANT

TEXT: VICTORIA SEGAL PHOTOGRAPHY: STEVE GULLICK

The glass-fronted bar in London's hippest postal district, a seedbed of such recent style essentials as '80s revivalism and the ironic mullet, is not where you might expect to find Jason Pierce hanging out. As the elusive visionary behind Spiritualized, he has spent the past decade making music that has been both influential and vital, but has never been in the least bit concerned about fashion. In 1992, as grunge stalked the earth, he released the sublime 'Lazer Guided Melodies', 25 years of psychedelia and pop narcosis condensed into one intoxicating inhalation. In 1995, as Britpop capered in the spotlight, there came the equally timeless 'Pure Phase'. And just to remind you how keen he is to keep up: it's been four years since Spiritualized's last album, the channelling of soul, jazz, gospel, modern classical and old-time heartbreak that was 'Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space'. It was written during the last Conservative administration, released before New Labour had a chance to ruin the honeymoon, existed at a time untouched by nu-metal, UK garage, Eminem, text-messaging or *Big Brother*. Yet it sounded like the future then, and somehow, it sounds like the future now.

Jason smiles through a plume of smoke and a pint glass. "What is it since the last one? Four years? Time flies, doesn't it?"

Now, finally, we are here to talk about Spiritualized's beautiful and astonishing new album, 'Let It Come Down'. It's a record that combines orchestral grace, rock'n'roll energy, luminous melodies and a startling lyrical honesty, and is just as likely to stand as gloriously alone this year as its predecessor did in 1997. In its symphonic scale, it speaks of Jason's desire to reach beyond the confines of rock'n'roll's skull, chasing the horizon in the quest for the perfect sound; in its deeply affecting lyrical intimacy, it speaks of a struggle to reconcile life with living, of 'sins' that seem to seek out the sinner and a god that's no help at all. There's none of the anaesthetised haze of 'Lazer Guided Melodies', none of the explicitness of 'Ladies And Gentlemen...'s *"me and a spike in my arm and my spoon"*. Instead, there's Jason singing, clear and lovely, *"The trouble with the straight and the narrow is that it's so thin I keep sliding off to the side/And the devil makes good work of these hands of mine"*.

At this point in the interview, the interpretation of some of its more striking lyrics remains untested ground – a testament to rehab and redemption, to cleaning up and settling down? Or as Jason maintains, not – but even the stories behind its studio methodology threaten to dwarf the ambition and imagination of most other bands. When you think how

Fuel injection: NME *gives Jason his (turbo) props*

tedious the words "studio methodology" are, that's some achievement. In fact, as Jason points out, considering the album was an exercise in mastering something he'd never done before, four years was actually pretty quick. When you hear about the 100-piece orchestra, you can only agree. One thing's certain: it was worth the wait.

Today, in his Tokyo-DJ style jeans and a black T-shirt, Jason Pierce looks the part of the modern man – his beer Kirin, his cigarettes Camel, his trainers flaking silver patent. He looks well – even like someone who has been out in the sun recently – and, for a person whose reputation for disliking interviews precedes him, he's surprisingly chatty. But the most obvious thing about him is the charisma force-field that surrounds him, that rare and strange phenomenon that you know when you see it but can't quite explain. Or, to put it less cosmically, it's like one of those insect-o-cutors that crackles in the corner of restaurants. You walk into it and *zzzzzp*... Defence mechanism or not, it's remarkable.

Last time *NME* interviewed him in 1997, he was living with the parents of his ex-girlfriend, former Spiritualized keyboardist Kate Radley, near Bristol. Now, he calls this stylishly gritty part of east London home – "You settle where your friends are," he says. "Things have changed radically from when I first came here – people thinking

> "People would leave the room when I walked in. You can do that in most places, but it's quite difficult to do on tour."

they're in New York. But to be honest, it doesn't matter where I live, we do so much travelling."

Even more life-changingly, he became a father.

"I've got a little daughter," he says sweetly. "Well, all daughters are little. They're littler than me."

How old is she?

"Better get this right... she's 11 months. She's pretty cool, she's chilled out," he says, smiling into his hand. "It was life-changing, but not in the way everyone says. It's not a chore. We haven't changed our lives around having a child. She crashes out when there's loud music. She sleeps in later than me. She gets up at midday and I'm up through the night so it's cool."

Did you play her music in the womb?

"No. A lot of that isn't founded in science. Like those flashcards you're meant to use – you end up with middle-class people using some crank's method on their child. As long as she's happy – some stimuli helps. Maybe the odd snippet of conversation thrown her way. And a book or two." He's grinning now. "But we haven't sat and worked out a plan."

As if parenthood wasn't a grand enough project, Jason embarked on a mission to redefine what he could do with his music.

"The idea was to remove all the stuff that I thought made Spiritualized Spiritualized," he explains. "The space bleeps, the stuff that's immediately engaging on 'Ladies And Gentlemen...', that gives the music an otherworldiness. I wanted to see if the songs would stand alone."

So everything was written and arranged orchestrally, not using the band. First, he sang each song onto Dictaphone. Then he transposed them onto piano. "That probably took the most time, because I don't play the piano," he says nonchalantly. "I had to hit every note until I found the one I was looking for. And then I did the same with the string parts." At one point, he was so lost in the music, he forgot people would have to play it. He had 45 string parts written for a 30-piece string section. The eight French horn players of reality multiplied to 16 in his head.

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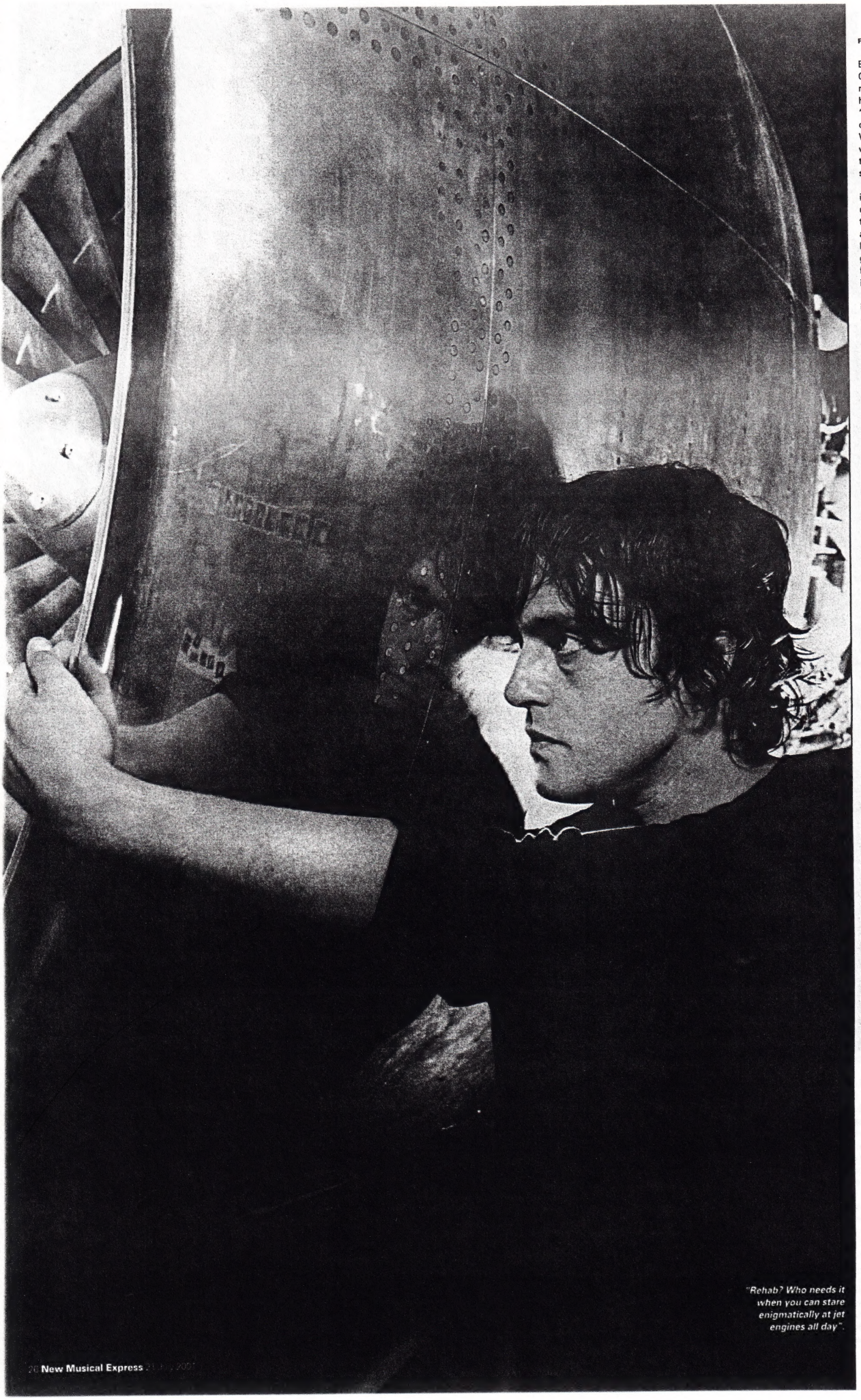

"Rehab? Who needs it when you can stare enigmatically at jet engines all day".

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

"I wanted something like Duke Ellington or Gil Evans or the Ray Charles sessions and for some reason I thought they must be huge sessions." He smiles wryly: "I had a mental image of huge orchestras playing those tracks. When I finished the record and went back to those recordings, they had 16-piece bands. So it was short-sighted of me, I guess.

"But the thing that was most important to me from the very first demos I did of these tracks was that they were incredibly intimate and that the voice was almost like being said or whispered. I think it's good we weren't satisfied with the first few mixes we did. It's important to make a record you're 100 per cent happy with. And it's important to say that this is the record I wanted to make." He lights another cigarette: "It doesn't get any better for me if people agree with my love of the album. I don't need people to say whether it's good or bad, because I'm not undecided."

It's a brilliant feeling, says Jason. He's been "toasting the band and myself" ever since. But not everyone in Spiritualized has shared his single-minded commitment to the cause. Right now, he's excited about touring with a band that includes guitarist and trusted co-producer John Coxon, keyboard player and Julian Cope escapee Thighpaulsandra and saxophonist Ray Dickaty, but it was a very different picture back in 1999. Guitarist Mike Mooney, bassist Sean Cook and drummer Damon Reece (now Lupine Howl) went to the press to explain how, one day after signing contracts with the band, they were sacked. In their subsequent interviews, Jason was painted as something of a tyrant, exploiting them for his musical gain but refusing to give them any real reward.

"Spiritualized has had its engine ripped out," said Sean Cook at the start of 2000. "It's up to Jason now."

"It just became impossible to tour," says Jason evenly. "It was almost like they formed a small union. This band, more than any other I see, is kind of free – you can do what the fuck you like; you've just got to be around for an hour or so every night to play music. And the restrictions that were being put on the band were making it impossible to run – no consecutive tours, a day off for every day that we play. You either really love doing it – which I do – or you impose a whole set of restrictions which makes it very difficult. It's a bonus if you're in America and they say, 'We want you to come down to Brazil for two weeks.' It's not something you say, 'Well, we've got a rule here...' And there was absolutely no communication – people would leave the room when I walked in. You can do that in most places, but it's quite difficult to do on tour." He smiles dryly: "It's a shame – I think Sean is the one who lost the most because the others were in the band for a very brief period. Someone told me they were laying claim to 20 years between them in this band – but that's kind of like me saying between myself, John Lee Hooker and Little Jimmy Scott we've put nearly 200 years into the business."

How did it get that bad?

Another cigarette flares up. "Because we had the wrong people. The thing is, it's not like I've now got a band of more stupid people who will just accept the status quo – 'This is how it is in my band' – because it's just not like that. And the fact it came out at all was just a press release, wasn't it, to release an album. Which I think is not the best way to release a record. You say, 'We've got a

fucking great album here.' You don't say, 'We've been sacked by Spiritualized and by the way we've got a record out.' Maybe it's selfish to say Sean lost the most – maybe he's happier now. I did get back in touch with him and say, 'I've not made any attempts to find a replacement, it's still there if you want it.' But it's happened and it's looking good this side. I don't know where they're at."

Have you heard Lupine Howl?

"No. Have you?" He looks straight ahead. "When I'm making a record I don't listen to contemporary records – I play my record against Ray Charles and Patsy Cline and Elvis. It does nothing to make my record better if I'm playing it against whatever this month's favourite record is."

Written with what comes over like wry self-knowledge, 'Let It Come Down' veers from a weary, damaged desperation to a luminous faith in love. There's the rock'n'roll rehab-clinic sarcasm of 'The Twelve Steps' – *"I don't think I'm gonna find Jesus Christ/So I'd rather spend my cash on vice"*; the raw honesty of 'The Straight And The Narrow' – *"I don't fall off the wagon you know/I take a dive and go as deep as I can go"*; the incredible poignancy of 'Anything More' – *"As long as you and I do more than just survive/We'll have a real good life"*. Ever since Jason's time in the legendary drug-swaddled Spacemen 3, people have wanted to know about his relationship with narcotics.. After the heroin-and-heartbreak of 'Ladies And Gentlemen...', 'Let It Come Down' offers a warmer, wiser perspective. There are arguments, cigarettes, *"looking at the TV and burning holes in everything that I get"* – but, explains Jason, without the "transmission bleep" of 'Ladies And Gentlemen...', that sense the music is being beamed in; it just *seems* more grounded.

"I think they're all quite similar lyrically. It's got the same humour as the last record," he says.

"People thought that 'I Think I'm In Love' was cynical. Well, it's a joke. Like the line, *'I'm good for nothing/Nothing's good enough for me'* on 'Don't Just Do Something'. It means exactly the opposite of how you first read it. The whole album has double takes on everything. Like, *'I can't stand falling no more'* (from 'Out Of Sight') – there's a double take there on the word 'stand."

So you think the humour is overlooked?

"Just some! Just some! The last album's a case in point, isn't it? I don't care to be honest. I don't mind if people think we're the most serious people in music. But quite a lot of that is fed initially by what people read. One glaring example is the last album being written about Kate. It was never my line and I never spoke about anything to do with that but it was written very early on and it just became that whole album. It never came from me. That's quite a big thing to put on record, that I wrote a whole album about somebody else."

Just because you didn't say it, though...

"In fact, I would say I was saying the opposite, but it was written anyway. I guess it's a better story. It is quite charming, isn't it?" He pauses. "And I've seen the seeds of that happening again. Here we go again," he says without malice. "I've apparently written an album about getting straight and redemption and there isn't a single track on the album that concerns either one of those things. There just isn't."

> "I didn't go [into rehab]. I didn't do research or anything."

But you can see how 'The Straight And The Narrow', for example, might be interpreted as a song about cleaning up...

"I guess the one word in there is *'trouble'* but it's not a statement of 'this is difficult', it's just a plain fact. From my point of view it's completely the opposite of reading it as, 'You have a hard time on the straight and the narrow.' It's actually written from a perspective *way off* the straight and the narrow."

Giving up on it?

"Not even going there!" He laughs. "But it doesn't matter. It doesn't actually change what's on the record. It just might make my life a bit easier for the next six months when I'm doing interviews if the things that are initially said aren't completely off the mark."

Wouldn't it be easier for you to be asked about being on the straight and the narrow, though?

There's a long pause: "Maybe. Maybe it doesn't matter either way. It's very difficult to talk about, isn't it?" He gives a wily smile: "I'm winding it up now. I'm not – but it is very difficult to talk about... music. I don't want to know what the specifics are."

What about 'The Twelve Steps'? 'The Straight And The Narrow' could be taken as universal – but that's a pretty tight frame of reference...

"You *must* see the humour in that. It's more about people who become zealots. It doesn't seem that dissimilar from Deep South religious nonsense. People almost become addicted to that as a way of life – it's almost more life-changing than drugs are. And it's far, far from the best way of helping people. It's hard work doing those 12 steps but it's not as hard work as hanging round with someone who's got those 12 steps under their belt." His radar kicks in and his gaze sharpens: "I didn't *go*. I didn't do research or anything..."

It is rooted in quite remarkable vitriol, though...

"Not from my perspective. It's just plainly not." He laughs: "It's a joke. And it's sung like that because it's a rock'n'roll song. I'm not trying to cop out but it's not written from anger. I'm not like that. I know there is a side of it that does work. I'm not stupid, I can see that. But I think three of the steps mention God. If you're going to address the problems of people with problems with drugs, then logic goes out of the window. You hit them with a load of religious fundamentalism, this finding your inner light, and you put them in a scenario where they can never go into or past a pub for the rest of their lives – and that doesn't seem very logical to me."

> "It's actually written from a perspective *way off* the straight and the narrow."

And you haven't felt that pressure?

"There's no research involved. I'm afraid not."

At this point, guitarist and studio accomplice John Coxon appears to take Jason to another pub ("as long as it hasn't got a beer garden"). So what you're saying is this isn't so much redemptive as... unapologetic?

"What you see is what you get. That's it. That is how it is and that is how it is with me. This is me, this is what I get up to. This is my life. But I don't think I'm particularly radical".

He collects up his cigarettes, finishes his beer and heads out the door.

It's easy to dismiss this as musician cliché, or another textbook evasion. Fed the same line by other bands, it would be. But in Jason's case, the more you think about it, the more it seems that maybe this is as honest as anyone could get.

The night after the interview, Jason phones *NME* at home. He's called back because he's picking up a trend in the way people are interpreting 'Let It Come Down', and he's keen to knock it on the head. Not because it *matters*, you understand, but because the sprouting theories "just so, so miss the point". Today, *The Guardian* newspaper used the album as a hook for a piece about "rehab records", comparing it to John Lennon's 'Cold Turkey' and Black Grape's 'It's Great When You're Straight... Yeah!' He insists he isn't the kind of person to get upset by what he reads but "it's just wrong". He seems faintly amused, for a start, that a record that features the line *"Out of sight is always out of mind/I think out of mind is out of sight"* should be taken as a testimonial to cleaning up and settling down.

"If I had been in rehab, the last thing I'd do is make a record about it. Because that's basically the target of 'The Twelve Steps,' the target of the joke. And it's like hearing about other people's operations or their acid trips. Or childbirth."

He points out, in a roundabout way, that 'The Straight And The Narrow' could be read as a love song. "I spoke to John after you left and he was going – this is his little joke – 'It's a love song, isn't it, it's basically saying this is how I am, this is what you get.'" And he emphasises – with relative vehemence – that just because he's stating he has not been through rehab, doesn't mean he's actually saying, 'Look, I'm still fucked up, everybody' – "That's also a dumb thing to say."

He's right, of course. It might be compelling but you no more need to know the biographical facts behind 'Let It Come Down' than you need to know the DNA codes of the people you love. Earlier in the interview, Jason quoted some lyrics from a song removed from the album's final running order.

"'*Oh please Lord may I be foolish because when men are wise they are not satisfied/Please Lord may I be lonely because when men are not they are reckless'*." He thinks carefully. "And the end bit is *'Please Lord, put a tiny little spring in my step'*." And he smiles. Whatever its past, the present really doesn't get any grander than this.

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